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ABSTRACT

This paper presents data obtained from a questionnaire mailed to 45 library directors of academic libraries in the southeastern United States, as well as discussions of trends and their implications for the future of academic librarianship in the region. Emphasis is placed on knowledge gained via degrees in library science and the applicability of additional graduate degrees for academic librarians. Directors' responses to the questionnaire accounted for 1,378 full-time academic librarians in the region. The survey revealed that slightly more than 34% of the librarians held graduate degrees in addition to the master's degree in library science. Comparison with a 1978 study shows an increase in southeastern academic librarians' educational credentials. The report concentrates on the acceptability and significance of earning additional degrees, including the influence level of additional graduate degrees on hiring decisions, hiring at the administrative level, determining salary at the time of hiring, and determining periodic salary increases. (THC)

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EDUCATION AND CHANGE
ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS FOR THE 21st CENTURY

by

Pamela Palmer and John E. Evans

The nucleus of academic library leadership for the 21st century will develop from librarians already in the field. One recent trend is of significant importance in increasing librarians' leadership potential. That is the trend for academic librarians to gain expertise in a variety of disciplines by earning additional graduate degrees. Too often the implications of this trend are ignored or examined in only a superficial manner, but it is current knowledge that will share academic librarianship of the next century.

The librarians who will succeed or who will fail to meet the challenges for the future are us. We are the theorists, the planners and the managers, who define and will continue to define the scope of academic librarianship. For that purpose, we are probably the best educationally prepared of any group of librarians in the southeastern library history, but the long term impact of the preparation is questionable if other changes do not occur.

This preparation and knowledge are exemplified by the increasing number of academic librarians with additional graduate degrees. In 1984, I surveyed large academic libraries in the southeast - those states included in Association of Southeastern Research Libraries. Forty-five library directors returned the questionnaires, a response rate of over 88 percent. The purpose of this paper is to present data from that survey and, by analyzing the data, to present implications for the future of academic librarianship in the region. In discussing the

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implications, the emphasis is on knowledge gained by those degrees, rather than the degrees as ends in themselves. As mere credentials, degrees are of limited influence on the future. As indicators of competencies and expertise, however, academic degrees represent the most widely-recognized evidence of knowledge.

Directors' responses to the questionnaire covered 1,378 full-time academic librarians in the region. The survey revealed that slightly over 34 percent of the librarians held graduate degrees in addition to the master's degree in library science. Further, 9 percent were in the process of earning additional graduate degrees.

The increase of southeastern academic librarians' educational credentials is apparent by comparison with an earlier study. In 1978, Palmer and Gambill conducted a survey of second master's degrees among academic librarians in the region. At that time, 19 percent of the librarians held a second master's degree compared with the approximately 28 percent holding that type of degree in the 1984 study. This 9 percent increase in six years indicates a strong trend toward increasing the knowledge base of academic librarians. No comparable 1978 figures are available for other types of additional graduate degrees, but, in 1984, the doctorate in library science was held slightly by more than 1 percent, the doctorate outside library science was held by 5 percent, and all other graduate degrees accounted for only 3.72 percent. The regional average for additional graduate degrees was approximately one degree earned

or in progress for every 2.3 librarians in the population. This average is an indicator of the trend's impact and illustrates that a number of librarians hold more than one additional graduate degree.

Librarians hired since 1980 held additional graduate degrees at almost the same percentage as all librarians with such degrees in the population. The frequency of earning additional graduate degrees after employment makes opportunities for degree work particularly significant. Data reveals that 8 of 10 librarians engaged in degree work were enrolled at the institution where they were employed.

Opportunities for earning graduate degrees at the institution where employed depend on the policies and practices of the higher education system, the institution, and the library. Without these opportunities available to librarians, institutions in the region are inhibiting knowledge acquisition and are failing to prepare for future demands. Library directors in this region tend to actively support additional graduate degree work (34 of 43 directors), and this support is reflected in related policies and practices. Among the incentives offered at the majority of large academic libraries were complete or partial waivers of registration costs, ability to adjust work schedule to accomodate class scheduling needs, and the possibility of leaves of absence for degree pursuit.

Further evidence on the acceptability of earning additional degrees after employment was found in the job advertisement

practices of libraries. While no responding institution consistently required additional graduate degrees in job advertisements, almost 70 percent of the institutions "sometimes" expressed preference for additional degrees.

Regional academic library directors expressed belief that more emphasis will be placed on additional degrees during the next decade. Over three-fourths of the directors indicated such degrees are positive factors in academic libraries and are important for librarians in both administrative and non-administrative positions. Almost the same proportion believed librarians should be financially rewarded for such degrees, indicating that additional graduate degrees make librarians more valuable to the institution. The strength of the concurrence with these statements reveals the value placed on the degrees by library directors. In contrast, however, only approximately half the directors agreed that "Librarians with additional graduate degrees are more valuable to institutional administrators (such as Presidents & Vice Presidents) than librarians without such degrees." Comparing the roughly 50 percent agreement on that issue with the 87 percent of directors who felt librarians with such degrees are more valuable to the institution points clearly to a major gap between directors' opinions and their perceptions of institutional administrators' opinions. If directors correctly assess institutional administrators' views on the topic, the value of additional graduate degrees is unclear to those at the higher level of institutional adminis-

tration, those at the level with the most influence on the reward system: salary, promotion, and tenure.

The strong nucleus of leadership needed to effectively move southeastern libraries toward and into the 21st century is dependent not only on developing librarians with greater knowledge but also on retaining those librarians after additional degree work is completed. For academic libraries to realize benefits from the increased knowledge base, their reward system must reflect a value on additional knowledge. Four aspects of the role of additional graduate degrees give further insight into the issue of rewards systems. The influence level of additional graduate degrees on hiring decisions, hiring at the administrative level, determining salary at the time of hiring, and determining periodic salary increases was measured. Of these four aspects, additional graduate degrees were most influential on determing salary at the time of hiring. Next, they were influential on hiring at the administrative level, followed by hiring decisions in general, and finally determining periodic salary increases. The relatively low influence of additional degrees on periodic salary increases compared with the other three aspects indicates potential salary differentials. The librarian who earns a graduate degree while employed and remains at the same institution is likely to realize a lower salary impact attributed to that degree than a newly-hired librarian with the same degree.

While it is unlikely that institutional and library

administrators plan to invest substantially in a librarian's education only to risk losing that librarian to another institution, this appears to be the case. Research on salary details and implications is needed to determine the impact of this situation, but library and institutional administrators should examine their salary structures to determine if their reward systems adequately address the issue of librarians who earn additional degrees. Otherwise, librarians with the best leadership potential may be lost to the institution. The implications of institutional administrators' perceived opinion of additional graduate degrees and their value also needs investigation. Effective reward systems are unlikely unless both directors and other administrators positively view the degrees.

These issues raise the important question of the value of additional graduate degrees within acadmic libraries. Much of the writing in library publications appears to be based on the notion that once such degrees are earned, their application in academic libraries will follow naturally. Very few changes in libraries simply happen. Positive change is almost invariably the result of careful planning and evaluation. For the value of additional graduate degrees to be realized, library directors and other librarians need to plan for change while examining goals and objectives in light of the three main functions of most higher education institutions.

Teaching, service, and research are all functions in which additional graduate degrees can contribute substantially. In addition to these functions, institutional statements of purpose can give insight into areas for consideration at specific institutions.

Planning for teaching in libraries should include consideration of the formal and informal traditional teaching opportunities for librarians. Any library area offering public service, as well as the more formally organized bibliographic instruction programs, provides opportunities for teaching which can be enhanced by the knowledge gained with additional degrees. Further, the additional degrees may serve as credentials to create new opportunities for teaching graduate students. The changing clientele and needs of higher education at a particular institution may offer non-traditional approaches made possible by greater knowledge of various disciplines.

The area of service is particularly significant for consideration in light of additional degrees. Librarians' specialization may provide new expertise valuable to institutional administrators and other departments on campus. In research also, librarians enhance abilities through additional degrees earned. As researchers of increased skill, librarians are better prepared to actively work on research projects alone or with other faculty members having similar specializations and to generate the much needed research into library issues.

In considering the implications of additional graduate degrees on southeastern academic libraries, several factors are significant. First, earning additional graduate degrees is a trend which has increased in force during the past six years. This factor has impact on librarianship, service, and research. Second, library directors tend to favor the earning of additional graduate degrees and to view them very positively, although directors are less sure of the degrees' value to institutional administrators. Third, the reward system related to salary appears to penalize librarians who earn additional degrees and remain at the same institution, even though the institution is likely to have contributed to the earning of the degrees and benefited from the degrees having been earned. Finally planning for realizing the full value of earned degrees, for the librarian and the library, is needed.

Library directors and librarians can ill afford to neglect these implications if southeastern academic libraries are to have the needed leadership for the future. Lack of planning is the most significant problem. The library director is in the key position to facilitate degree work and to lead in planning, but effective planning requires knowledge of the experiences of other librarians at the institution. Directors' own professional experiences with additional graduate degrees may differ substantially from those of other librarians; both the experiences of administrators and non-administrators warrant serious consideration when planning for change. Further, the role

of additional graduate degrees is a concern for state and regional organizations, which often have among their purposes support for professional development.

All librarians need to sharply examine their current situation. If librarians assume additional degrees are a clear pathway to academic success in their employing institution, they should examine the current reward structure to determine the priority of additional education. Although the percentage of academic librarians holding additional graduate degrees can not as yet be considered a mandate for new, higher standards for academic librarianship, there is a definite trend toward educational attainment that is at a higher level and more broadly based. Against this trend there exists a failure to plan for the accomodation of more highly educated librarians and a reward structure that largely overlooks this phenomenon. The limits of degree attainment leading to high administrative position are clearly obvious in the reality that a scant forty-five library directors supervise 1,378 librarians in the population surveyed. This reality indicates the need for a reward system and definition of success which encompass both administrative and non-administrative positions. The question remains - Where will the degrees lead - promotion, professional development, administrative placement, kudos, or egregious credentialing?

If this region intends to produce and retain librarians with the optimum educational preparation for future needs, many changes

are required. The alternative is frustration and doubt that additional degrees are meaningful and valued. Academic libraries in the 21st century are being shaped by planning today; the role of additional knowledge in the future depends on decisions made now.

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